



# *Lovin' My Marriage*

**Marriage Education:  
Facts and Statistics  
Finance and Marriage  
Communication Skills**

EXTENSION  
**UtahState**  
UNIVERSITY

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## Conflict Resolution

Current thinking is that people have these conflict resolution styles:

1. **Avoiding** or denying the **conflict**. Such a person hopes the problem will go away. Usually it doesn't. So, this is a bad approach. But many people take it. Do you?
2. Many prefer to **give in** rather than fight. Why? Sometimes they are being a martyr, sometimes scared, sometimes seeking appreciation, etc. In any case, this is another bad approach, because it is unfair, it generates no creative solutions, and usually such an accommodator remains very unhappy.
3. Some people **get mad and blame** the other person. "You ignored my authority" or "You are totally unfair" or "You've hurt me and I want to get even," etc. Such a conflict becomes an ugly battle in which they must "get their way" and win at any cost (like in a divorce settlement).
4. Other people appear to seek a **compromise**, i.e. find some middle ground and "work out an agreement." That would be wonderful, if it were entirely true, but sometimes a part of this approach is subtle but deftly trying to win more ground than your spouse. The objective becomes trying to prove you are clever or slick. Misrepresentation, threats-with-a-smile, and so on may slip in, rather than simply seeking an optimal solution for both sides.
5. A few people can control their anger, competitive, and I-give-up feelings and genuinely seek an innovative, fair, optimal solution for both parties.

### Try these steps:

1. Set a time and place for discussion
2. Define the issues
3. Talk about how each of you contributes to issue or problem.
4. List past attempts to solve the issue.
5. Brainstorm 10 ideas that might work.
6. Discuss and choose one solution to try.
7. Agree on how you will work on this solution.
8. Set up next discussion time.
9. REWARD each other for working on this and do something FUN!

Even if your brainstorming ideas seem far-fetched, try to think of at least 10 ideas that have a possibility.



## **Lovin' My Marriage Lesson Plan**

**Objective:** To decrease the divorce rate of marriage.

Over 50 % of all marriages end in divorce, with over half of these ending in the first 2 years. Research has proven that with marriage education, marriages can be much more successful. Helping students to understand statistics, causes of divorce and provide them with education will decrease their risk for divorce.

### **Costs of Divorce:**

- Divorce costs the United States over \$33 billion annually or about \$300 per household each year.
- The average divorce costs about \$30,000 in direct and indirect costs. Relocation, loss of work and an average of \$18,000 in attorney fees

Utah: 2001 - 9,735 divorces = over \$300 million  
(\$125 million to Utah; \$175 million to Federal Government)

**Marriage is important to Utahans.**

**Children do better in a two parent family.**

- Utahans marry an average of 3.5 years younger than the national average.
- Utah's divorce rate for 2002 was 44%.

### **Causes for divorce:**

- Lack of Commitment -83%
- Too much conflict -53%
- Infidelity-52%
- Getting married to young -44%
- Financial problems -33%

***Marriage will be the most important decision that is made. Education can increase the success of marriage.***

Lesson 1: Strengthening Marriage

Lesson 2: Money and Marriage

Lesson 3: Communication Skills

Resources: Bean Game  
Budgeting pages  
Kindness Poster

## **Seven Principles of Making Marriage Work**

### ***1. Enhancing love maps***

Do everything you can to know as much about your partner as possible, from likes and dislikes to favorite food. The more you know, the more you can anticipate your partner's hopes and wishes and act on these.

### ***2. Nurture your fondness and admiration***

The antidote to contempt in marriage is admiration. I need to focus on all the things I admire about my partner.

### ***3. Turn toward each other rather than away***

Every day find ways to connect, to show your spouse that you are concerned and involved. The antidote to stonewalling is to make your spouse an important part of your daily life.

### ***4. Let your partner influence you***

While we shouldn't give up our personal standards and power, studies show the most stable and happy marriages are characterized by power sharing, especially from husband to wife.

### ***5. Solve your solvable problems***

Seek to do everything you can to help your partner in the struggles you share. Often couples are defensive to hearing a problem; seek to understand and help.

### ***6. Overcome Gridlock***

Mutuality: making your partner's dreams and hopes as important to you as your own dreams and hopes. Gridlock means being stuck in a primary conflict of great importance to each person; mutuality helps us support the other.

### ***7. Create Shared Meaning***

Sharing the deepest sources of personal value. Typically this includes life views, spirituality, service to family and community, and even recreation.

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### Focus on Friendship

The basis of any happy marriage depends on friendship, respect for and enjoyment of each other's company.

What do we do that enhances our friendship?

What is the best thing about our relationship?

### Punctuate the Positive

We can be either positive or negative, we make those choices. No one else makes them for us.

### Rely on Rituals

A ritual is something that has a positive emotional meaning to both parties. It might be the same thing every time of day, a good bye kiss, a touch, a service, a note with lunch, a special occasion.

### Discuss your Expectations

Learn to communicate with each other. Listen, repeat, and then talk (do you have the lips or the ears?). If someone doesn't know what you expect or feel, it will be hard to meet that expectation.

### Doing Right for Others?

Don't allow yourself to fall into the pitfall of "should haves". When we fail to do what we "should have" for our spouse, we begin to resent them.

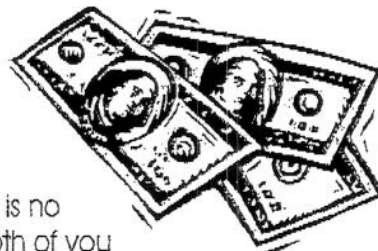
How do we treat our spouse? (As a Tool, An Obstacle, or Irrelevant)

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## Financial Do's for Couples

1. Discuss your feelings about money with each other.  
Know each others dreams and expectations.
2. Compromise by adjusting some financial habits. There is no wrong or right way to handle money. What works for both of you is right.
3. Set financial goals together.
4. Maintain a small separate account, as well as some credit, for each partner.
5. Discuss insurance, investing and retirement plans together.
6. Maintain some mad money for each-you shouldn't have to answer for each penny.
7. Discuss money monthly, as you reconcile budgets. One partner is usually in charge of detailed budgeting, but both partners should discuss and review finances monthly.



## Don'ts

1. Try not to be judgmental of your spouse's money management style.
2. Don't just do it the way your parents did.
3. Never assume that you know what your spouse needs and wants are.
4. Never use money as a weapon (retaliation).
5. Don't keep secrets about debt.

Money is the #2 reason people divorce. It is a major concern when having a successful relationship. Understand, discuss and know what your money goals are.

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## Communication Class Review

**Identify the importance of  
communication in marriage.**

Communication is used by:

**7% Words, 35% Tone of voice, 58% Body language**

- **Discuss specific communication skills.**  
Listening, Rephrasing, Interpreting  
Expressing yourself, Resolving conflict
- **Send and Receive good messages**
- **Plan specific activity for improving communication.**
- **Take time for each other.**
- **Give affirmations!**  
Words of kindness, affection, humility

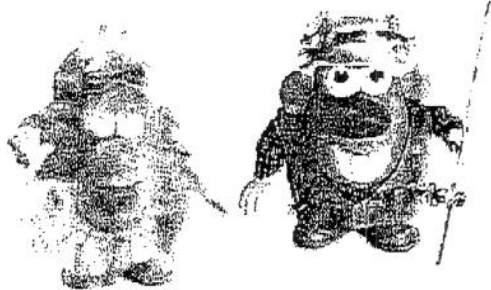
## Communication is the Key!

Listen actively

By listening, you show interest, love and respect for your spouse. Listening requires work to block out distractions and your own thoughts and feelings. While you listen:

- Offer positive feedback and smile
- Don't interrupt
- Don't judge

Be aware of body language  
Avoid brutal criticism  
Give compliments  
Focus on the topic at hand  
Say it nicely  
Ask open ended questions



Practice saying: **I feel hurt when you say.....**

**I feel sad that you...**

Instead of: **YOU MAKE ME** mad, angry or whatever

Conflict is common-how you handle the conflict will make a strong healthy relationship  
The following are common conflict issues, take the time to know and understand where each of you stand on these:

Finances  
Sex  
Friends  
Work and household chores  
Values  
(lying, cheating, etc)

**SET a TIME:**

Set aside an hour a week to just discuss your feelings

Set a **DATE** night when you just enjoy each other

(walks, video, TV, dinner, swim, service to someone)

Set apart time for friends and other family members-time apart and outside interests are important

**FORGIVE AND LOOK IN THE MIRROR!**

**RESPECT** each other-caution with name calling